

THE KINGDOM OF ARC'AX*

Robert H. Hewsen

Glassboro State College

One of the peculiarities of Armenian historiography in the West has been a neglect of the history of the Armenian Plateau in the period between the Battle of Manzikert of 1071 and the rise of the early Armenian liberation movement in the late seventeenth century. Captivated by the emergence of the remarkable state of Armeno-Cilicia, Western historians have tended to lose interest in events taking place in Armenia proper once it was overrun by the Turks, passing over with a few broad strokes the invasions, campaigns, wars and conquests which they examine in minute detail when discussing the Urartian, Roman, Byzantine, Arab, or Bagratid periods.¹ Not until the recent appearance of *Histoire des Arméniens* (under collective authorships, editor G. Dédéyan), which devoted slightly more than two of its sixteen chapters to this period, was any serious attempt made in the West to come to grips with the detailed history of these admittedly confusing and obscure centuries.²

The reason for the neglect of such a lengthy and relatively recent period in Armenian history is not a dearth of sources, for these are ample—at least for the first half of the period. Nor is it due to the lack of a history worth relating, for much of great importance was taking place in Armenia at this time. The reason, I believe, for slighting these six centuries is the lack of enthusiasm on the part of many historians for a period of Armenian history which they perceive to be primarily the history of alien peoples ruling over an Armenian population no longer master in its own homeland. The alarums and excursions of Cilician history are much more arresting for those interested in the Armenian odyssey, and the story of the later Armenian political, cultural and ecclesiastical revival is perhaps thought to be more

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edifying, and more relevant for others less interested in the earlier periods. Yet, even if the history of Armenia is considered to be more the history of the Armenian people themselves than that of the Armenian plateau and of the comings and goings of the foreign powers which have dominated it, we should still be aware that in this period there are numerous examples of national endeavor on the part of the Armenians of the homeland proper, and that there was not a moment during these long centuries when all of the Armenian people lost their independence or control over the destiny of at least a part of their native land.

Space does not permit a thorough examination of the various centers of Armenian independence which survived after the Turkish deluge had broken over the high plateau. Therefore, I shall confine myself to the circumstances which surrounded and made possible the survival of autonomous enclaves in Eastern Armenia; that is, in Siwnik' and Karabagh (Լարաձ), and in particular to what I shall call the "Kingdom of Arc'ax," which flourished, however feebly or fitfully, from the eleventh through thirteenth centuries. I shall not elaborate upon the history of the Armenian meliks, who appear at a later date and with whom I have dealt elsewhere.³ Rather I shall concentrate on their predecessors, those dynasts who bridge the period between the fall of the principality of Albania in the early ninth century and the emergence of the melik houses in the fifteenth. A brief examination of the history of this part of Armenia in this period will, I think, demonstrate the significance and excitement of the events which took place here in the Armenian "dark ages," many of which events still await their historian.

I

As the Caliphate weakened in the ninth and tenth centuries, a number of independent states emerged from among the various Armenian principalities which had survived in Armenia during the period of the Arab domination, their rulers one by one achieving recognition of royal status from both the Caliphate and the Byzantine Empire. The largest of these states, eventually centered at Ani, in Տիրակ, appeared under the Bagratuni dynasty in 885.⁴ This was followed by Vaspurakan (under the Arçrunids) in 908;⁵ by Dizak or K't'iš in southern Arc'ax (under the Ařanřahikids), calling itself the "Kingdom of Albania" in c. 922;⁶ and by Siwnik' (under its native dynasty) in c. 961.⁷ Thereafter, there emerged, as offshoots of the Kingdom of Ani, two

more independent Bagratid Kingdoms, one centered at Kars, in the earlier principality of Vanand, in 962,⁸ and the other at Lori, in Tašir, in 982, also calling itself the "kingdom of Albania."⁹

Finally, from c. 1000 to 1266, the Princes of Xaç'ēn, the earlier land of Arc'ax, today known as Karabagh (Ġarabaġ), also assumed the royal title, forming yet a third "Kingdom of Albania" or, alternatively, "Kingdom of Arc'ax,"¹⁰ and obviously laying claim to the same Albanian inheritance as the Bagratid Kings at Lori and the Afanšahikids of Dizak. To distinguish these Kings of Albania in Arc'ax-Xaç'ēn from the other claimants to the same dignity, I shall refer to them as the "Kings of Arc'ax," a unique and more accurate title, which on occasion they themselves used. Thus, by the end of the first millenium A.D., no less than seven Armenian kingdoms were functioning upon the Armenian Plateau.

Few of these political formations were fated to last for long. Spearheads of the Seljuk Turkish invasion forced the King of Vaspurakan to cede his state to the Byzantines as early as 1021, while Ani passed under Byzantine rule in 1045. Then, under the leadership of Alp Arslan, a full-scale Turkish invasion of Armenia was launched. Ani was taken in 1064, and after the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, the Byzantines were cleared from the plateau forever, and the Turks were left virtual masters of Anatolia. Kars had fallen to them by 1065, while Manzikert had given them Vaspurakan. Of the seven Armenian kingdoms only four remained: Lori-Albania, whose king, Gurgen (1046-1081), saved his state only by accepting Turkish sovereignty and giving his daughter to Alp Arslan; southern Siwnik' (Siwnik'-Baġk'), Dizak-K't'iš, and Xaç'ēn, all of which had accepted Turkish overlordship as well.¹¹

The Seljuk domination of Armenia coincided with the rise of the Georgian state, which had united into a single kingdom in 1008, and which, after the coming of the Mongols in the thirteenth century, created a pan-Caucasian state of formidable proportions. As the Turks and their various Muslim vassals began to falter in the twelfth century, Georgia expanded into northern and eastern Armenia, capturing Ani, Dvin and Kars, and all of Siwnik', wisely placing these regions under Armenian vassal princes, and reducing to the same vassalage the rulers of Dizak and Xaç'ēn.¹² We shall not concern ourselves here with the Bagratid Kings of Lori, who lingered on until the late thirteenth century, or with such Armenian vassals of the Georgian kings as the Xaġbakids of Vayoc' Jor, the Orbelids of Siwnik', or the Mxargrjelds, Gagelids and Mankaberdelds to the east of Lake Sevan,

all of whom profited from the Georgian domination of Armenia. Rather we shall focus upon the various branches of the Siwnid house ruling in the regions to the south and southeast of the lake. Let us examine briefly the history of this dynasty so as to understand how the Kingdom of Arc'ax emerged under its aegis.

II

The Princes Siwni, a family which may have been of Scythian origin, were the immemorial dynasts of the land of Siwnik', the largest principality of ancient Armenia (Map I), but are known only since the conversion of Armenia to Christianity,¹³ in the early fourth century, at which time Antovk (Antiochus) Siwni was head of the house. Antiochus' granddaughter, P'aranjem, was the consort of King Aršak II of Armenia,¹⁴ and her nephew, the arch-traitor Prince Vasak of Siwnik', was the Persian viceroy of Armenia at the time of the Vardananc' war almost a century after.¹⁵ Still later, in the seventh century, Gregory II Novirak, Prince of Siwnik', who had married the daughter of Xosrov II, Shah of Iran, died fighting for the Persians against the Arabs at the Battle of Qadisiya.¹⁶ Thereafter, the family may be traced with only a few breaks and uncertain filiations until the time of Vasak III (d. 821), when our sources became abundant, and when we find for the first time, to our knowledge, the territory of Siwnik' being divided among different branches of the family (Map II).¹⁷

Now, from earlier times, Armenia had been composed of a number of autonomous states each ruled by a sovereign prince (išxan). The lands of the prince were family domains, indivisible, and passed from father to son, or, lacking a son, to the Prince's oldest brother. This system began to break down in the Arab period (c. 650-c. 960), when the other male members of the house (sepuh-s), began to seek autonomy over specific lands held by them within the family domain.¹⁸

This process must have begun by the end of the eighth century for at the beginning of the ninth we find the principality of Siwnik' being divided and redivided among the various scions of the house.¹⁹ The senior line, which we may call the branch of West Siwnik', always held the bulk of the family domains, and, when the principality achieved international recognition as a kingdom in c. 961, it was the prince of West Siwnik' alone who possessed the royal title, being recognized within the family as "Great Geniarch" (mec

nahapet) over the other branches of the house. This senior line became extinct, however, in c. 1019, when King Vasak VI died leaving a single daughter Kotramide (Catherine), who had been married to King Gagik I, Bagratid ruler of Armenia at Ani, and now, apparently having inherited the bulk of her father's domains, would have had to bring them into the hands of her husband.²¹

The second branch of the Siwnid family, the line of North Siwnik' or Gelark'unik' had already disappeared in c. 912. Its lands, lying in the basin of Lake Sevan, may have been annexed by the Bagratids, who were expanding easternward under Ašot II at just about this time (922) making themselves masters of Utik' and of the other lands lying between Lake Sevan and the River Kur²² (Map III).

The third branch of the Siwnid House, the line of South Siwnik' or Kovsakan-Baġk' is the only one in Siwnik' which survived both the Bagratid annexations and the Turkish conquest. Having inherited the royal title after the death of Vasak VI, it continued the kingdom of Siwnik' (in Baġk') as late as 1071.²³ In that year, however, King Gregory III, who married Šahanduxt, sister of King Sennacherib of Dizak and had no children of his own, left Baġk' and its throne to his brother-in-law, whose territory—Dizak—would have thereby doubled in size. This Sennacherib, son of Dakin-Sevada, was of the House of Aʿanšahik, which until the first century A.D. had ruled Albania, and which had apparently survived all these centuries here in Arc'ax. This principality, known both as Dizak or as K't'iš after its center, lay in what was later southern Karabagh, and adjoined that of Baġk' on the east. Sennacherib had saved his principality at the time of the Seljuk invasion by accepting the overlordship of Alp Arslan's son, Sultan Malik Shah, who, occupied elsewhere, had adopted a policy of maintaining local Christian rulers in Caucasia in return for submission and payment of taxes.²⁴ King George II of Georgia (1072-1089) had gone in person to make his obeisance to the Sultan at Ispahan, and Sennacherib, now King of Dizak and Baġk', did the same.²⁵

After the death of Malik Shah in 1093, the order which he had established began to break down. In 1097, the Crusaders arrived in Syria. Meanwhile various Seljuk chieftains and rebellious lieutenants had begun struggling for possession of the newly conquered Turkish lands. The resulting turmoil soon spread to Armenia. According to Stephen Orbelean, King Sennacherib, while at Ispahan, had thoughtlessly promised the hand of his

daughter to Č'ort'man, Sultan Malik Shah's favorite slave. Once freed and raised to high rank, Č'ort'man expected to receive his bride. The king, however, now apparently back in Dizak-Baġk', refused to render his daughter, and in 1103 Č'ort'man began launching attacks on his territory. Leading a force of Kurdish infantry, he surrounded Łap'an in Baġk', and though its citadel held, the town itself was taken and its population massacred.²⁶ Sennacherib, taken by treachery, was slain.

Over the next sixty years, the Turks continuously raided Baġk' gradually seizing one portion of it after another until in 1166 its political center, the fortress of Baġaberġ, was captured.²⁷ We do not know if these Turkish raids extended as far as Dizak, the eastern half of the kingdom. In any case, we continue to hear of a "King of Baġk'" for another ninety-five years following the fall of Baġaberġ, although—and this is something not always appreciated—by this title we must understand "King of Dizak" and only titular King of Baġk'; that is, King of the eastern half of the kingdom ruled by Sennacherib prior to c. 1072, which had originally belonged to Aġanšahikids before they inherited Baġk', and where they continued to rule under the title "King of Baġk'" taken when Sennacherib had acquired Baġk' from his wife's brother, King Gregory III (Map IV).²⁸

Now, directly to the north of Dizak lay the lands of the fourth line of the Siwnid House which we may call the eastern branch, the line of Xač'ēn, whose background we shall examine presently. Close ties bound the two states of Dizak and Xač'ēn. King Gregory IV of Dizak married his daughter Kata (Catherine) to Hasan the Great, Prince of Xač'ēn,²⁹ and, when Hasan's grandson, Hasan II, known as Hasan-Ĵalal-Dōla (c. 1214-1266) married the daughter of the last king of Dizak-Baġk', the two states were merged, Hasan-Ĵalal-Dōla taking the title "King of Arc'ax and of Baġk'," and subsuming into this title all of the earlier Siwnid, Aġanšahikid and Mihranid claims.³⁰ Let us now examine this fourth or eastern branch of the House of Siwnik'. Its origin is interesting and it is the Siwnid line which founded the Kingdom of Arc'ax and from which most of the melik houses of Eastern Armenia originated. This branch alone survived the medieval period, and individual families descended from it survive today—from Karabagh to Moscow, and around the globe to Rome, Paris, New York, Washington, San Francisco and Hollywood.³¹

III

As far as we can tell, the land of Arc'ax originally had no princes off its own. Who owned it or how it was governed when it was passed to Albania in 387 are unknown to us.³² All we can be sure of is that when the Principality of Albania collapsed in the ninth century, Arc'ax was in the hands of the Aġanšahikid dynasty, which was descended from the earliest royal family of Albania.³³ In 822, when the last Presiding Prince of Albania was murdered by a close relative of the Siwnid House, his widow took her only surviving child, a daughter, Spġam, to the castle of Xaĉ'ĕn deep in the mountains near the frontier between the Siwnid and Albanian lands. Shortly thereafter she married her daughter to Atrnerseh, a Siwnid prince, whose father, Sahl, son of Smbat, had forcibly seized Geġark'unik' from the Siwnid family domains.³⁴ Having married the heiress of the last Prince of Gardman and last ruler of Albania, Atrnerseh (821-853) took the title "Prince of Gardman and Albania" and lost no time moving into Arc'ax (apparently seizing the northern part of it—Vaykunik'—from the Aġanšahikids). There he built the fortress of Handaberd and erected a palace at Vaykunik', a hot spring which had been the site of the royal baths of the old Albanian rulers.³⁵ Since we know that Atrnerseh already owned the district of Sġdk' (the eastern half of Geġark'unik'),³⁶ we must assume that Sġdk' was his share of his father's ill-gotten gains, for as we have seen, the Siwnid line of Geġark'unik' disappears in c. 912; Atrnerseh's descendants, on the other hand, continued to hold Sġdk' until the eighteenth century.³⁷

Atrnerseh's son, Gregory, extended the holdings of his line in Arc'ax, and his son, Isaac-Sewada, subjected the district of Gardman or Parisos and other lands to the north³⁸ which, of course, were his by right of inheritance through his grandmother, Princess Spġam. The expansionism of Atrnerseh and his descendants makes it clear that we are witnessing a conscious attempt on the part of his house to reconquer step by step the old Albanian lands inherited, at least in theory, through Atrnerseh's marriage to Princess Spġam. It was in this way that the East Siwnid state of Xaĉ'ĕn or northern Arc'ax, ruled by this fourth Siwnid line, rose to prominence during the ninth and tenth centuries, and it is not surprising to find John-Sennacherib II, a sixth generation descendant of Atrnerseh and Spram, styling himself "King of Albania" as late as 1000,³⁹ or of his seventh generation descendant, Hasan I, using the title "Prince of Xaĉ'ĕn and King of Siwnik'," as late as 1142.⁴⁰

It is this state, founded by the fourth line of the House of Siwnik' in 821, which became a kingdom by the year 1000.⁴¹ Ulubabyan calls it the principality of Xač'ēn. I prefer to call it, at least for the period when its rulers possessed the royal title, the "Kingdom of Arc'ax."

Now Hasan I, called "The Great," was an important prince ruling over all of the northern half of Arc'ax⁴² but, after abdicating to enter a monastery in 1182, he apparently divided his kingdom between two of his sons: the elder, Vaxt'ank II, called Tonk'ik (p. 1201-p. 1214), received the southern half of the realm, namely Xač'ēn, and a younger son, Gregory surnamed "The Black," was given the northern half, i.e. the lands adjoining the southeast corner of Lake Sevan (Sōdk' and Vaykunik' or Car, Map V).⁴³ From Vaxt'ank-Tonk'ik was descended the Siwnid line of the Vaxt'ankeank' Princes of Xač'ēn, from whom issued the House of Hasan-Ĵalalean, Meliks of Xač'ēn, the senior line among the later melik houses of Eastern Armenia.⁴⁴ From Gregory the Black was descended the younger Siwnid line of the Dop'eank' so-called from Gregory's wife Susan-Dop', daughter of Sargis II, prince Mxargrjeli.⁴⁵ From these Dop'eank' there were issued several other of the other melik houses (Šahnazarean, Beglarean, etc.).⁴⁶

But although the Kingdom of Arc'ax was thus divided, it did not cease to expand. Having married the daughter of the last Aṭanšahikid King of Balk', who reigned in Dizak to the south, the son of Vaxt'ank, Hasan Ĵalal-Dōla (p. 1214-1266), inherited his father-in-law's domains and took the title "King of Arc'ax and Baḱ'" (Map VI).⁴⁷

Several aspects of Hasan Ĵalal's genealogy come into play here. First, Hasan-Ĵalal's wife was the last surviving member of the ancient House of Aṭanšahik, the Princes of Dizak and Baḱ', who had ruled as the Kings of Albania a millenium before. Second, it was through absorption into this house that the first and third branches of the house of Siwnik' had become extinct. Finally, Hasan-Ĵalal was descended in the female line from the Mihranid Princes of Gardman, who had been the Presiding Princes of Albania under the Arabs, and he, himself, represented the senior male member of the last surviving branch of the House of Siwnik'. Thus there devolved upon this one prince all of the earlier titles and claims possessed both by his ancestors and by those of his wife, and through them, all of the major inheritances of the various dynasties of Albania and Eastern Armenia. At one and the same time, then, Hasan Ĵalal Dōla could legitimately style himself King of Siwnik', King of Baḱ', King of Arc'ax, and King of Albania, not to mention Prince

of Gardman, Dizak and Xač'ēn—as well as Presiding Prince of Albania—as he chose. He selected, as we have seen, the title "King of Arc'ax and Bałk'." And this was 200 years after the fall of Ani. So much for the tenacity of the rulers of Arc'ax.

IV

Geographically, the Kingdom of Arc'ax included all of the earlier land of Arc'ax, the adjoining principality of Gardman-Pařisos to the north, and the northwest Siwnian lands of Getark'unik' and Södk'. It thus comprised almost 10,000 sq. km. and was a more than double the size of present-day Highland Karabagh (4388 sq. km. Map IV). The kingdom had no permanent capital, no cities and, except for Pařisos, no towns, both Ganĵa and Šamxor lying outside of its limits. The castle of Xoxanaberd⁴⁸ or Xač'ēn was its first center but Hasan the Great preferred to live at the large village of Car⁴⁹ with its hot springs, and Hasan-Ĵalal's preferred residence was the castle of Akana.⁵⁰ Eventually the family settled at the fortress of Hat'erk' on the Terter River.⁵¹ There were about fifteen forts, fortresses and castles in the kingdom. Besides those already mentioned, we may cite Berdkunk', Berdakur, Getabaks, Gardman, K't'iš and Tfi, Hakarakaberd, Handaberd, Xavkaxařac' and Södk'.⁵²

Politically Arc'ax was a unified state for over three and one half centuries until Hasan the Great partitioned it between two of his sons in 1182. Shortly thereafter, however, the acquisition of Dizak by Hasan Ĵalal-Döla gave the kingdom a third section. Each third was then ruled by a different line of the same Fourth Siwnid branch, the senior line, the Vaxt'ankeank' reigning in the central land of Xač'ēn in the Terter Valley; then the Dop'eank' to the north and northwest in Getark'unik', Gardman, Södk' and Car; and finally, what I choose to call the "Avaneank'" holding Dizak to the south (Map VII).⁵³

The kingdom of Arc'ax elaborated its foreign policy—its own local Weltpolitik. It accepted the suzerainty of Georgia during its ascendancy under Queen T'amar the Great (1187-1213), and quickly accepted Mongol domination when forced to do so in the mid-thirteenth century.⁵⁴ Its rulers intermarried regularly with neighboring Gagelids, Mxargrjelids, Mankaberdelids, Orbelids of Siwnik', the Bagratids of Lori and Kars, and even with their Mongol overlords.⁵⁵ The survival of the state and the preservation of

its autonomy were, of course, its foremost concerns.

As far as military power was concerned Arc'ax, of course, was a feeble state, feudal in nature, and its rulers relied upon an unprofessional army composed of warrior peasants who, led by local magnates and village headmen, rallied to the banner of their lord upon his call. Always defensive, these forces are not reported to have been launched upon a campaign beyond the frontiers of the realm unless, as in the case of Hasan-Ĵalal, their lord himself was required to attend his suzerain with a more or less respectable force of men-at-arms.⁵⁶

Needless to say, the Kingdom of Arc'ax attracted its share of Muslim predators eager to despoil its rulers of their modest means. In the Albanian Chronicle of Mxit'ar Goš, for example, we learn that in the year 1144/5 the Turkish emir, "Djōli, growing arrogant, turned against the region of Xaç'ēn, captured all its fortresses, demolished the churches, and burned down the monasteries."⁵⁷

In 1145/6 Djōli was back a second time:

"For the fortresses he took on the first occasion did not remain in his hands . . . for some of the nobles who had been hiding in forest caves retook them and rebelled . . . Angered by this, Djōli marched against them seeking revenge. He was not able to capture the fortresses, but he completely laid waste the entire land. He also burned down the holy monastery of Dadivank'."⁵⁸

Similarly, in a colophon of an Armenian manuscript dated 1417 we read that:

In our land of Xaç'ēn, there was a pious prince named Zaz who departed this life . . . and the survivors of his family . . . are all subjects of the lawless ones, and thus, the authority in our Haykazeen land was diminished.⁵⁹

In a moment we shall be reading a colophon from yet another manuscript where we will hear about another despoilation of the region by the Muslims and about how the Dop'eank' Princes of the Siwnid house responded to this in a vigorous and effective way.

For its basic needs, the kingdom relied upon its rich crops, its flocks and herds, its dense forests, its mines of copper and gold, and its skilled craftsmen. A few luxuries such as silk and salt were brought in from outside via the old trade route of the Arab period, which connected the city of GanĴa with both central Armenia and Naxičevan and which followed the Terter

Valley directly past the castle of Hat'erk'.⁶⁰

Ecclesiastically, the Kingdom of Arc'ax lay within the jurisdiction of the Catholicossate of Albania, a subdivision the administrative structure of the Armenian Church, and roughly speaking, the kingdom was coterminous with this jurisdiction.⁶¹ The Hasan-Jalaleans early got control of this catholicossate whose primate by the fifteenth century was always a member of the family. The title "Catholicos of Albania" passed from uncle to nephew, and his ecclesiastical lands, finances and influence was thus always available to the house.⁶² Located at the Monastery of Amaras in Dizak after the destruction of Partav,⁶³ the Catholicossate was transferred to the large and handsome monastery of St. John the Baptist at Gandjasar founded by Hasan-Jalal-Dōla and completed in 1238, and there it remained until the office was suppressed by the Russians in 1828.⁶⁴ There were more than a dozen monasteries in the kingdom. In addition to the two just mentioned, we may cite Dadivank'.⁶⁵ Vanakan, Mak'enoc', Xot'avank', Xat'ravank', Cicer-nakavank' and Xoranašat. Moreover, the ruling house supplied abbots and bishops to other monasteries and sees as far afield as Haḫbat and Sanahin.⁶⁶

As in Ani, Kars, Vaspurakan and elsewhere, where the Armenian monarchies had been restored, a certain cultural renaissance took place in Arc'ax and its vicinity in the tenth to thirteenth centuries. It is within the context of this renaissance that we must place the eastern Armenian literary activity, which has been called the "Albanian School" of Armenian literature, and which produced, among others, such writers as the historian of Albania, Movsēs Dasxurenac'i (tenth century);⁶⁷ the philosopher and scientist, Yovhannēs Sarkawag (d. 1129);⁶⁸ the first Armenian jurist, Davit', son of Alavik (d. 1140);⁶⁹ the codifier of Armenian law, Mxit'ar Goš (d. 1213), who founded the monastery and cultural center of Nor Getik;⁷⁰ his pupil Vanakan, vartabed (d.c. 1250), who founded the monastery of Xoranašat,⁷¹ and his pupil, Malak'ia the Monk 1272.⁷² Finally, we must not omit the three great historians of the thirteenth century, Vardan of the East (Arevelc'i),⁷³ called "The Great," who was also known as a geographer and writer of fables (d.c. 1270);⁷⁴ and Step'anos Ōrbelean, historian of the House of Siwnik' (d. 1305).⁷⁵

Finally, a few words must be said about the ethos or *Weltanschauung* of this obscure and tiny state. There is no question whatsoever that the Kings of Arc'ax and their successors, the princes and Meliks of Xač'ēn, were conscious of their role as one of the last centers of Armenian independence

in the increasingly deepening ocean of Islam which was engulfing southeast Caucasia.⁷⁶ In inscriptions,⁷⁷ colophons⁷⁸ and other documents,⁷⁹ they often refer to themselves as being of the House of Albania or the House of Armenia, and, when their melik descendants addressed letters to the Pope or to Peter the Great, they did not shrink from speaking on behalf of the entire Armenian people, recognizing in themselves the last remnant of the Armenian nobility of old, the traditional leaders and spokesmen of the nation as a whole.⁸⁰ In the values and way of life of these meliks, we detect clear echoes, however feeble, decadent or impoverished, of the ethos of the great naxarar houses of ancient and medieval Armenia as described by Ehišē, Movsēs Xorenac'i and others a millenium or more before.

V

In the time of Hasan-Ĵalal-Dōla, the Mongols reached Armenia. He submitted to them and led his troops in their army. Unfortunately, he fell afoul of the Emir Arghoun and was decapitated at Qazvin in 1266.⁸¹ Thereafter, although his descendants continued to rule in Arc'ax, they no longer, to our knowledge, possessed the royal title, being content to style themselves by the earlier title "Princes of Xač'ēn."⁸² Meanwhile, Dizak, acquired by Hasan-Ĵalal-Dōla, had, after his execution, passed to his cousin Vaxt'ank, ancestor of the later Meliks-Avanean of Dizak.⁸³ Hatir Melik, a seventh-generation descendant of Hasan-Ĵalal-Dōla, became the first Melik of Xač'ēn in the time of the Black Sheep Turkoman Lord of Armenia, Jehan Shah, about 1457.⁸⁴ His descendant, Allahverdi II, who died in 1813, was ruling Xač'ēn when the Russians came to Karabagh in 1805, and was the last Melik of his house.⁸⁵ The Hasan-Ĵalalids played a major role in the early Armenian independence movement, and in 1786 the Albanian Catholicos, Yovhannēs XII, Hasan-Ĵalalean was executed by the Persians for his traffic with the agents of Catherine the Great.⁸⁶

As for the younger lines of the Siwnid House of Arc'ax, they too had their distinction. Among the Dop'eank', for example, we hear of Prince Šahinšah the Great, who fell on the field of honor together with several of his sons, defending his people against the invasion of Timur (c. 1390).⁸⁷ In a colophon of a fifteenth-century manuscript, we read of this Sahinsah,

in whose time the Muslims became powerful and the house of
Armenia was overthrown, and all our princes having been

dispersed, foreign invaders confiscated the domains of the great Prince Hasan. The great Prince Aytin, having gone to their court, succeeded after three years of effort and much expense, in freeing the monasteries and villages from the hands of the infidels. May the God of the Universe grant him the rewards for his labors. ⁸⁸

The colophonist neglects to mention the more earthly award received by Aytin, for it was he who engineered the restoration of the Siwnid princes in their ancestral lands in Arc'ax-Karabagh, and the recognition of their status with the conferral upon them of the title "melik" (Map VII).⁸⁹ As another later example, among the Meliks of Dizak, we find Melik Avan II, a close friend of the last Safavid Shah.⁹⁰ After the fall of the Safavids, Avan served under Peter the Great, was recognized by the Tsar as an Armenian prince, and was one of the first of the long line of Armenians to serve as an officer in the Russian army.⁹¹ Finally, Israel Ori, founder of the Armenian liberation movement in the seventeenth century;⁹² the famed Russian-Armenian General Prince Valerian Madatov;⁹³ as well as Xač'atur Abovian, the first Armenian novelist and founder of the modern Eastern Armenian literary language,⁹⁴ were all three of royal Siwnid origin, descendants of the Kings of Arc'ax.

The Kingdom of Arc'ax, under one name or another, lasted from about 1000 A.D. to 1266—a period of over 250 years. I have traced its background and origins, and have followed its echoes down to the nineteenth century. I have also briefly sketched its political and dynastic history, but I have only begun to penetrate the subject. The kingdom also has its social history, as well as its ecclesiastical and cultural development, all of which need further investigation. What I have attempted to do here, following the guidelines of this conference, has been to demonstrate how the apparently insignificant dynasts and petty states of post-Bagratid Armenia served as a source of continuity between the period of the reassertation of Armenian independence in the ninth to eleventh centuries, and the rise of a new Armenian independence movement in the late-seventeenth century. This continuity between medieval and modern Armenian history is remarkable as much for its longevity as for its fragility—especially when we consider that the descendants of the "Kings of Arc'ax" played a prominent role in Karabagh during the period of the Armenian Republic,⁹⁵ and even after the establishment of Soviet Power, when as recently as 1965, a certain Nikolai Semyonovich

Melik-Shakhnazarov—a direct descendant of Antiochus, Prince of Siwnik' of the time of St. Gregory the Illuminator, was First Secretary of the Communist Party of Highland Karabagh and as such, we may be sure, firmly in control of the land of his ancestors.⁹⁶ This so-called "Autonomous" Province of Highland Karabagh, an Armenian-inhabited enclave within the Azerbaidjani Soviet Socialist Republic, is in direct lineal descendant of the medieval Kingdom of Arc'ax. A loose end in Armenian geopolitical history, its very existence is a testimony to the significance of the medieval kingdom, whose geography and whose rulers together imposed a sense of unity, identity and self-awareness upon its inhabitants, all reflected in the present-day "Karabagh Question" which has yet to be adequately resolved.⁹⁷

NOTES

*This paper represents work in progress and was written before the author obtained access to B. Ulubabyan's Xač'ēni iṣṣanut'yunē (Erevan, 1975). The reader is referred to this important work for additional information, greater detail, and for a Soviet Armenian point of view, as well as to the interesting and valuable article by the late S. G. Barxudaryan, "Arc'axi, Šak'i ew P'atisosi iṣṣanut'yunnerē ix-x darerum," Patmabanasirakan Handes (1971), 1:52-76; to the latter's Divan hay vimagrut'yan, vol. V. Arc'ax (Erevan, 1982), and to B. Limper's published doctoral dissertation, Die Mongolen und die Christlichen Volker des Kaukasus (Cologne, 1980), pp. 211-20, all three of which came to my attention after this paper was presented.

¹Thus, for example, Grousset's Histoire de l'Arménie (Paris, 1949) ends in 1071; J. de Morgan in his L'Histoire du peuple arménien (Paris, 1916), Engl. transl. E. Barry (Boston, 1956), devotes exactly twelve pages to the period between 1375 and 1679; V. Kurkjian in his A History of Armenia (New York, 1958) devotes ten to an even longer period (1064-1878), while D. M. Lang in his Armenia Cradle of Civilization ignores the entire five centuries between 1375 and 1878 altogether!

²G. Dédéyan (ed.), Histoire des Armeniens (Toulouse, 1982).

³R. H. Hewsen, "The Meliks of Eastern Armenia: A Preliminary Study," REArm 9 (1972), 285-329; idem. "II" REArm 10 (1973-74), 281-300 and "III" REArm 11 (1975-76), 219-43.

⁴C. Toumanoff, "Armenia and Georgia" in Cambridge Medieval History IV The Byzantine Empire, Part I (Cambridge, 1966), 612.

⁵V. M. Vardayan, Vaspurakani Arcruneac' T'agavorut'yuně (Erevan, 1969).

⁶C. Toumanoff, Manuel de généalogie et de chronologie pour l'histoire de la Caucasic Chretienne (Rome, 1976); *idem* Supplement (1978), 15.

⁷T. X. Hakobyan, Syunik'i T'agavorut'yuně (Erevan, 1966), 3.

⁸Toumanoff, "Arm. amd Geo.," 617.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Ulubabyan, *ibid.*

¹¹Step'annos Ōrbēlean, Patmut'iwn Nahangin Sisakan (ed. K. Sah-nazarian; Paris, 1859); Fr. trans. M. F. Brosset, Histoire de la Siounie (St. Petersburg, 1864), LIX.

¹²Atlas Gruzinskoi Sovetskoi Socialističeskoj Respubliki (Tbilisi-Moscow, 1964), 251-52.

¹³C. Toumanoff, Manuel, 226.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 229.

¹⁷Hewsen, "Meliks II," 282 ff.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹Toumanoff, Manuel, 230 ff.

²⁰Hewsen, "Meliks II," 282.

²¹Toumanoff, Manuel, 233.

²²C. Toumanoff, Studies in Christian Caucasian History (Washington, 1963), 219.

²³Step'annos Ōrbelean, LIX. For the date 1072 cf. Toumanoff, Manuel, 235. By the Kingdom of Bałk' we must understand a "greater" Bałk' which included, besides Bałk' itself, the neighboring districts of Jork' (Łap'an or Kapan), Arewik' (Dašton and Melri), and Kavsakan (Krham, the later

Barguśat), and also, at its height, Čŭkk' (Sisikan) and Haband. Baĥk', in both its greater and lesser senses, also included the subdistrict of Kašunik' lying east of Lesser Baĥk' and sometimes referred to as the "Other" Baĥk'. (T'. X. Hakobyan, *ibid.* map; Toumanoff, Manuel, 241).

²⁴SO. LIX.

²⁵SO. LXI.

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸Toumanoff, Manuel, 71-72.

²⁹SO, *Ibid.*; Toumanoff, *ibid.*, 72.

³⁰Toumanoff, *ibid.*, 239.

³¹Descendants of Melik houses sprung from the House of Siwnik' are found in all of these cites, all of them aware of their noble descent but none in my experience aware of their descent from the House of Siwnik.

³²P'awstos (5.12) cites Arc'ax, the Orkhistene of Strabo (11.4.4), but mentions no princes of the region. Eremyan, however, considers it to have been part of the territory of the Princes of Sōdk', Ptolemy's Sodoukene, but cf. Toumanoff, Studies, 182, n. 146.

³³Toumanoff, Studies, 216-17.

³⁴Movsēs Kaŭankatuac'i (or Dasxuranc'i), Patmut'iwn Aŭanian' asxarhi (ed. M. Emin; Tiflis, 1912); Engl. transl. C. J. F. Dowsett, The History of The Caucasian Albanians by Movsēs Dasxuranc'i (London, 1961), 3.19, 22.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 3.22. We do not know how much of northern Arc'ax the Siwnids controlled. There is evidence that an Aŭanšahikid branch held Xač'ēn until at least 1000 A.D. (see Barxudaryan supra n. 1).

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷Hewsen, "Meliks II," 302-03.

³⁸MD, 3.22.

³⁹Toumanoff, Manuel, 237.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁴²At least a part of the southern half of Arc'ax, known as Dizak, was under Afanšahikid rule until the mid-thirteenth century (cf. Toumanoff, Manuel, 71-72).

⁴³Cf. the stemma of the Siwnids by Metropolitan Balthasar Hasan-Jalalean published by Raffi in his critique of the Galt'nik' Larabali (infra, n. 46), published as Galt'nik' Łarabałi K'nnadatec' Raffi (Vienna, 1906).

⁴⁴Hewsen, "Meliks II," 317-18.

⁴⁵Toumanoff, *ibid.*, 238-39.

⁴⁶A. Beknazareanc' (pseud.?), Galt'nik Łarabałi (St. Petersburg, 1886), 180 ff.

⁴⁷Toumanoff, *ibid.*, 239.

⁴⁸MD 3.22. Xoxanaberd (in Persian), having given its Armenian name, Xac'en, to the earlier land of Arc'ax, must have served as its center for a considerable time.

⁴⁹M-F. Brosset, Histoire de la Siounie par Stephannos Orbelian, Introduction (St. Petersburg, 1866), 164.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 167.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 165. For the locations of Xoxanaberd, Akana and Haterk' cf. Haykakan SSR Atlas (Erevan, 1961), 106.

⁵²Haykakan SSR Atlas, 195-97.

⁵³Hewsen, "Meliks II," 321-23; *idem.* "Meliks II," 293-96.

⁵⁴K. Salia, Histoire de la Georgie (Paris, 1980), 222-25.

⁵⁵Toumanoff, Manuel, 238-40.

⁵⁶So heavy were the exactions laid upon Hasan-Jalal by the Mongols that he was unable to satisfy them, and, as a result, he was arrested, tortured, and cruelly executed at Qazvin in Iran in 1261 (Kirakos Ganjakec'i, Patmut'iwn Hayoc', LXIV Fr. transl.). M. F. Brosset, Deux historiens armeniens, St. Petersburg, 1870).

⁵⁷C. J. F. Dowsett, "The Albanian Chronicle of Mxit'ar Goš," BSOAS XXI Pt. 3 (London, 1958), 483.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹A. Sanjian, Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts (Los Angeles, 1969), 139.

⁶⁰Y. Manandyan, O trgovle i gorodax Armenii v svjazi s mirovoj trgovlej drevnix vremen (Erevan, 1945), Engl. transl. N. Garsoian, Trade and Cities of Armenia in Relation to Ancient World Trade (Lisbon, 1965), 161.

For a more detailed account of the economy of Arc'ax in this period the reader is referred to Ulubabyan's study (*supra* at *). Horsebreeding must have played a major or if not a preponderant role in the local economy but its very ubiquity led to its being virtually ignored by our sources. In his "Caucasica IV," BSOAS, XV/3 (London, 1953), p. 526, Minorsky translates a passage from Ibn-Hauqal's Kitab al-masalik wal-Mamalik (10th century) in which horses, apparently in large numbers, are cited as being a great part of the annual tribute paid by Arc'ax/Xač'en to the Arabs. In his commentary on this passage, Minorsky quotes Brosset (Histoire de la Géorgie, I, 441) to the effect that in the thirteenth century David Soslan, consort to Queen T'amar of Georgia, gave the fortress of Jarmanam and an entire village to obtain a particularly fine horse from the Vakhtang of Xač'en.

⁶¹The original jurisdiction of the Catholicos of Albania was, from at least the fifth century, expressed in his intitulatio "Catholicos of Albania, Lp'ink' and Č'olay," (MD 2.15; 3.23) and included all of southeastern Caucasia from the Araxes River to the Caspian Sea at the Fortress of Č'olay lying c. 40 km. south of Darband. In an inscription in the Monastery of K't'iš dated 1248 and recorded by Brosset (Introduction, 165), the jurisdiction of St. Grigoris, i.e. of the Catholicos of Albania, is described as:

"having for limits the rivers of Hałun and the Erasx, as far as the banks of Gatuhāt; Vakunis, on the River Vałazn; Karatnik (in some mss. Karutnik), with that (i.e. the river) of Xozan; Arist and its river; Hakari and the river of Hazar; Krtaget, its river and its limits; Dizak; Belukan with its river."

Although not all of these places are now identifiable, it is clear that we are dealing with a much more restricted area lying entirely in Karabagh and corresponding to the lands of the Vaxt'ankean and Dop'ean families.

⁶²Hewsen, "Meliks II," Chart I.

⁶³Brosset, Histoire de la Siounie, 144.

⁶⁴M. Hasrat'yan, M. Thierry, "Le Couvent de Ganjasar," REA XV

(Paris, 1981), 195.

⁶⁵J. M. Thierry, M. Hasrat'yan, "Dadivank' en Arc'ax," REA XVI (Paris, 1982), 259-287.

⁶⁶Toumanoff, Manuel, 238-39.

⁶⁷M. Abelyan, Hayoc' hin grakanut'yan patmut'yun, I (Beirut, 1959).

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, II:43-61.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 62-63.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 142-57.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 188.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 205.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 199.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 192.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 215-27.

⁷⁶In the reconstruction of Dadi-vank' and in the codification of the laws by Mxit'ar Goš, the first undertaken by Hasan the Great (1142-1182), and the latter by order of his son Vaxt'ang II Tonk'ik (1182-p. 1214), as well as in the construction of the monastery of Ganjasar by the latter's grandson, Hasan-Jalal-Dola (c. 1214-1265/6), we see the age-old concept of renovatio at work whereby the restoration of the kingdom is accompanied by the erection of sacred edifices and the promulgation of codes of law. The reign of Justinian is a classic example of this as are those of Augustus before him and of Charlemagne later on.

⁷⁷Cf. Brosset, Introduction; L. Ališan, Sisakan (Venice, 1893); M. Barxudareanc', Arc'ax (Baku, 1895); and S. Barxudaryan's DHV V Arc'ax.

⁷⁸Cf. Brosset, Histoire de la Siounie, but especially L. S. Xač'ikyan's XIV Dari Hayaren Jeřagreri Hišatakaranner (Erevan, 1950); Xač'ikyan, XV Dari Hayaren Jeřagreri Hišatakaranner (Erevan, 1958) and Sanjian's Colophons (based on the last two compilations).

⁷⁹Cf. Beknazarean's Gařtnik' Łarabati, pp. 180-208, and Balt'asar Metropolitan Hasan-Jalalean's genealogical table in Raffi's Critique, pp. 687-700, supra n. 43.

⁸⁰G. Ezov, Snošenija Petra Velikogo S Armjanami Dokumenty (St.

Petersburg, 1898), doc. No. 11, pp. 51-52.

⁸¹Hasrat'yan-Thierry, "Ganjasar," 294.

⁸²Toumanoff, Manuel, 231, 236-40. Cf. also Ulubabyan, Xac'eni Isxanut'yune which includes a discussion of the titles in use by the rulers of Xac'en.

⁸³The exact connection of the Avaneans of Dizak with the Vaxt'-ankeank' line is uncertain but its Siwnid descent appears uncontested (Hewsen, "Meliks I," 321-23; "Meliks II," 293-96).

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Raffi, Xamsayi melik'ut'iwnnerē (Vienna, 1906), 105.

⁸⁷Šahinšah, as sparapet, is cited in a colophon in Brosset, Introduction, p. 164.

⁸⁸Brosset, Introduction, 155-56.

⁸⁹Bekhnazareanc', 189-91.

⁹⁰Afak'el vdpt., Dizaki Melik'ut'iwnē (Vařarsapat, 1913), Niwt'er hay melik'ut'ean masin, 1.10-20; Raffi, Xamsayi Melik'ut'iwnnerē, 18-19.

⁹¹Toumanoff, Manuel.

⁹²Hewsen, "Meliks II," 323-24.

⁹³Hewsen, "Three Armenian Noble Families of the Russian Empire," Hask (Antilias, 1982).

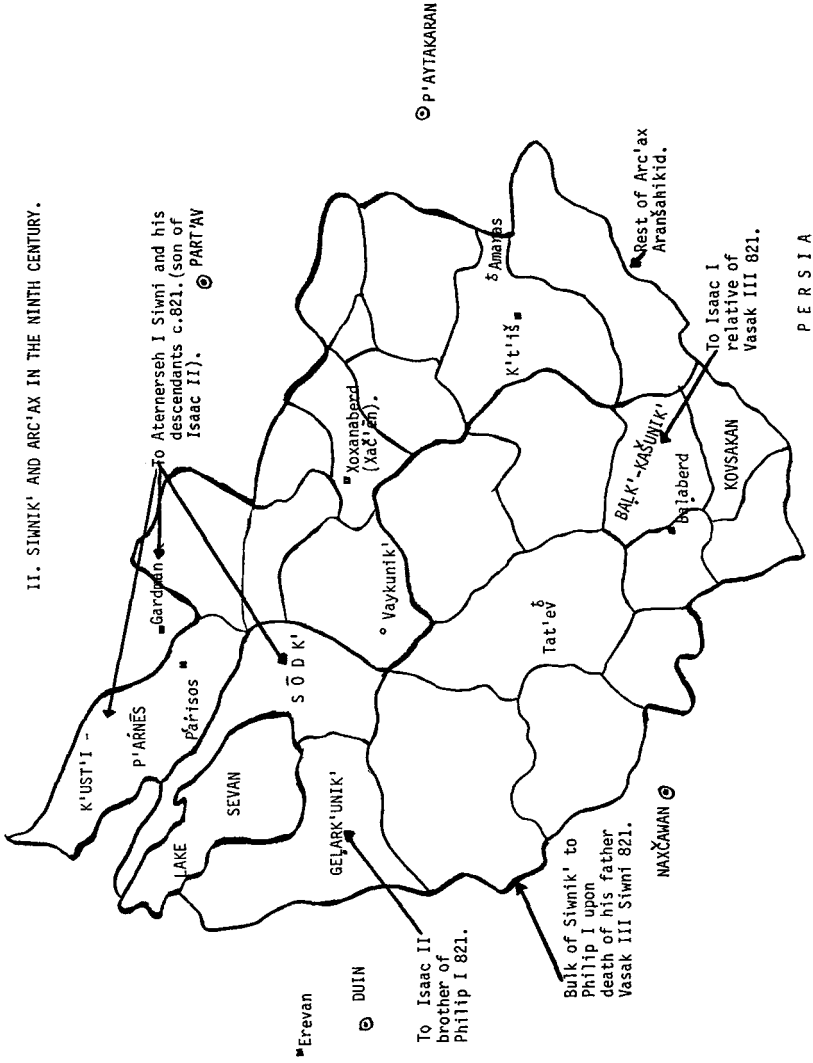
⁹⁴Hewsen, "The Meliks of Eastern Armenia IV: The Siwnid Origin of Xač'atur Abovyan," REA, XIV (Paris, 1980), 459-70.

⁹⁵R. G. Hovannisian, The Armenian Republic Vol. I: 1918-1919 (Los Angeles, 1971), 85, 86, 169.

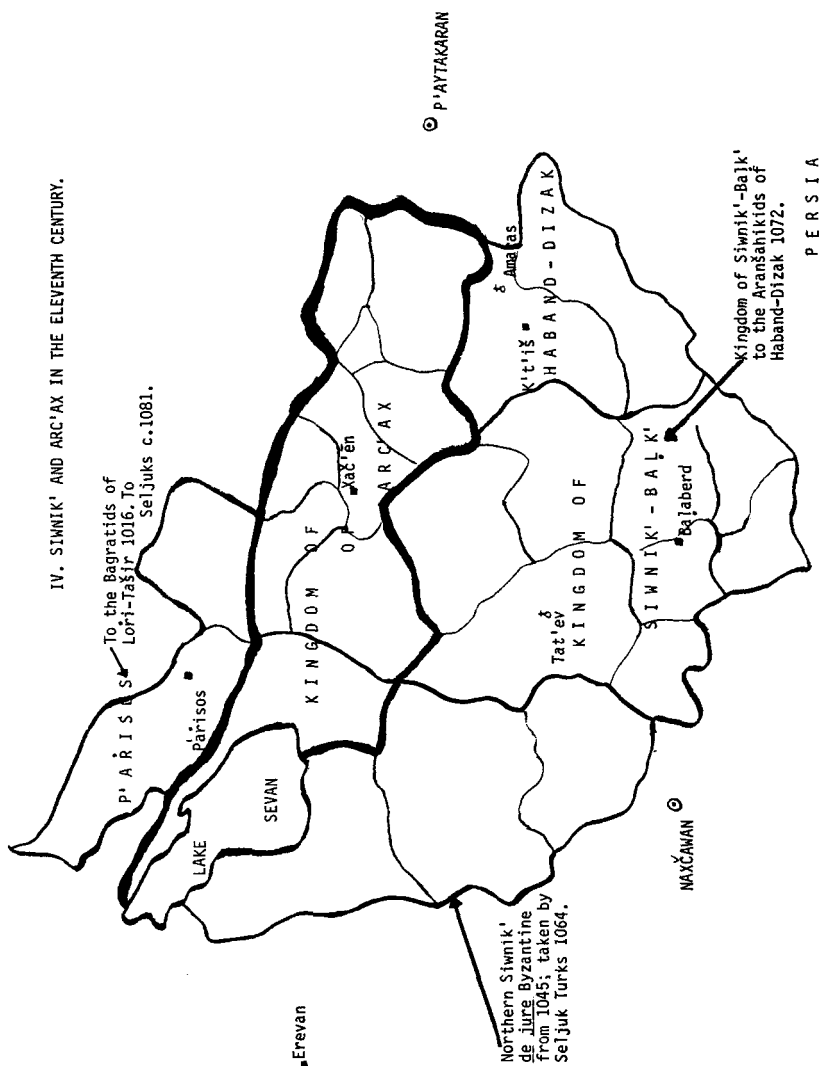
⁹⁶Who's Who in the U.S.S.R., 1965, s.v. Melik-Shakhazarov.

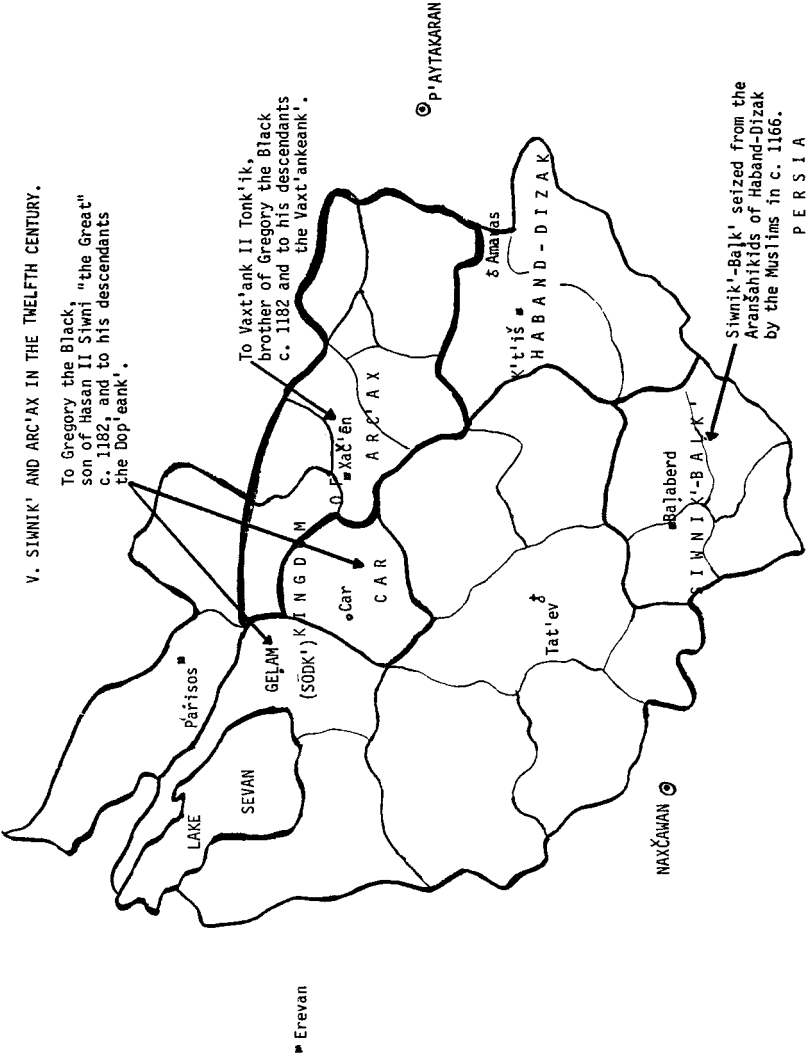
⁹⁷Cf. J. H. Tashjian, "The Problem of Karabagh," The Armenian Review, 21 (1968) 1-81, esp. 3-66; R. G. Hovannisian, "The Armeno-Azerbaijani Conflict over Mountainous Karabagh, 1918-1919," The Armenian Review 24 (1971) 2-94, esp. 3-39.

II. SIWNİK' AND ARC'AX IN THE NINTH CENTURY.



IV. SIWNİK' AND ARC'AX IN THE ELEVENTH CENTURY.





VI. SIWNİK' AND ARC'AX IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

